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SIDE-LIGHTS ON LINCOLN

BY JAMES MATLACK SCOVFL.

HE summer rain, making the graves bright and green, has fallen on the tomb of the many-sided martyr of Springfield for more than one generation.

Abraham Lincoln was a statesman who stood between a nation and perdition!

I was a member of the State Senate for three years, and President of that body for one year, during the war, in one of the middle States, and saw much of Mr. Lincoln from 1862 to 1865. He was usually found in the East Room of the White House, overlooking the Potomac.

One Sunday, after the surrender of Vicksburg, the President said, speaking of General Grant: "I fully appreciated the real strength of Grant's character when he spent a whole day with me in Washington, and asked that eight Major Generals and thirteen Brigadier Generals should be retired, solely to make room for the soldiers who had won and worn their 'wounds and honors a' front.'

"In vain," continued Lincoln, "I told General Grant that many of these officers were my personal friends, but he insisted. At last I yielded, and by doing so greatly strengthened the Army."

On the same occasion Mr. Lincoln said: "I did not at first understand Grant's plan of campaign at Vicksburg, but when I saw him run the batteries with his transports, ferry his army across the Mississippi at Bruinsburg, cut loose from his line of communication, swing out into the Confederacy, beat and disperse the army confronting him, break up the railroads, and sit down, calmly, behind the Vicksburg fortifications, I knew the rebel stronghold would fall by assault or by starvation.

"I had one scare," said Lincoln, kicking the blazing hickory logs in the open grate in front of him, "and I had only one, as to Grant's power of endurance, and that was on the second day's fighting in the Wilderness. General Jim Wilson, a great

soldier in the cavalry army of the service, always said that Grant was not a great tactician. He won his spurs by hard-hitting and his staying qualities as a fighter. The only riposte Lee ever made against Grant was late in the afternoon on the second day's fighting in the Wilderness, when the rebels, by a happy stroke, turned the Sixth Corp's right flank. Grant's nerves were severely shaken by this, his first reverse at the hands of Lee. General Rawlings, his Chief of Staff, Jim Wilson, and Phil Sheridan, in all that host, were the only soldiers of rank who served with Grant in the West. Meade had his headquarters near by, and the General trusted much to him.

"The rule in Meade's army, under like circumstances," said the President, "would seem to require it to retire, and I feared that on the next day our army would be on the way to the north side of the Rappahannock, instead of the road to Richmond; Sheridan had the same fear. Though the Army of the Potomac had not been beaten, I feared that the Division Commanders, comparatively unknown to Grant, might bring a pressure on him to go backward, to which he might yield. General Jim Wilson rode rapidly to General Grant's headquarters on a knoll, covered with scrubpine, and he was just ready to move and march on.

"General Grant saw the look of anxious inquiry on General Jim Wilson's face, and, without changing a muscle of his impassive countenance, he called out in assuring tones: 'It is all right, Wilson. The Army is already on the move for Richmond. It is not going back, but forward till we beat Lee or he beats us.'

"When I heard that," said Lincoln, "I never doubted the certainty of Grant's hewing his blind pathway across the Wilderness and into Richmond".

Abraham Lincoln, after the battle of Gettysburg, saw both Henry Winter Davis

and General George G. Meade come into the White House on one of the regular reception afternoons. I stood near Lincoln, and he leaned over, in his effusive, warm-hearted manner, towards me, grasped me by the hand, and said, looking toward Davis: "This looks well for us. Henry Winter Davis has not called at the White House till now, during the three years past." What the President meant was that Davis must see that Lincoln's chances for re-nomination were rapidly improving, for the Wade-Davis manifesto against Lincoln's re-nomination had just died a natural death. And later on, the same day, knowing Winter Davis's ambition, I said to him: "Would you accept a nomination behind Lincoln as Vice-President, from the Baltimore Convention?"

"Not behind that thing in the White House," replied the Maryland Congressman, with great hauteur. But God disposes of men and nations, as He wills. Winter Davis could have been nominated by acclamation at Baltimore for second place in 1864, instead of Andy Johnson, who only beat Lyman Tremaine (a war Democrat) of New York, as candidate for Vice-President, by two votes on a test vote in the New York delegation. Greely was for Tremaine, Seward for Andy Johnson, and Seward and Thurlow Weed were the stronger, Greely himself having broken up the once powerful triumvirate of Greely, Weed and Seward. With Winter Davis as President of the Senate (Vice President), Abraham Lincoln would most probably have died in his bed and Andy Johnson would have fallen into innocuous desuetude, after his term as Military Governor of Tennessee ended.

Nothing was too great for Henry Winter's ambition. He drove Montgomery Blair out of Lincoln's Cabinet, but he was as proud as Roscoe Conkling. The latter always seemed to possess some traits like Chatterton, the marvelous boy, the sleepless soul that perished in its pride.

On the afternoon of the reception already mentioned, while I stood near Abraham Lincoln, General Meade came in and was rapidly advancing toward the President. Lincoln's eyes flashed. Turning toward me, his head thrown back,

he said: "There! General Meade has just come in." With a tinge of bitterness in his voice, he continued: "And that is the great General who ought to have cut the rebel army to pieces at Falling Waters, and he didn't do it!" More than once afterwards Mr. Lincoln recalled to me that conversation. He never changed his opinion on great national questions or about any great General in my hearing, and I recall his criticism, a memorable and historical one, on General Fitz-John Porter. And in criticizing General Meade, he, the sweet-souled martyr of Springfield, never failed to do justice to the great achievements of the hero of Gettysburg. It was of that battle I have heard Lincoln speak these words:

"Of the two great efforts to enslave the human race in body and in mind, the first met its grave 200 years ago under Cromwell, at Marston Moor; and the second met' its doom under General Meade, at Gettysburg."

Mr. Lincoln was seriously and earnestly concerned about his re-nomination. Montgomery Blair's "time had come," because he, Blair, sought the nomination in 1864 at Baltimore, against his Chief. Chase had to leave the Cabinet for the same reason. Simon Cameron had just caused the Legislature of Pennsylvania to sign a memorial recommending Mr. Lincoln's re-nomination for President: and my mission to the White House reception (the day I met General Meade and Henry Winter Davis of Maryland there), was to convey the not unwelcome intelligence to the sweet-spirited Lincoln that the Legislature of New Jersey had signed a round-robin following Pennsylvania in favor of Lincoln's re-nomination. The next day I appeared at the East room of the White House by invitation. Upon comparing notes Mr. Lincoln, who was a master-mind in politics, took a card from his vest pocket and explained to me with the accuracy of an exact science that he was only thirty-one votes short of re-nomination in the approaching Baltimore Convention. By the way, Rev. Dr. Robert J. Breckenridge of Kentucky, a patriot, faithful among the faithless, was the temporary president of that great convention, and he was received

with tumultuous acclaim when he delivered his stirring and ringing address on opening that vast congregation of patriotic men.

There was one thing that caused Mr. Lincoln no little uneasiness; and in his frankness, which was an integral part of his nature, he did not pretend to conceal the fact that he feared his enemies would make Grant a candidate for the Presidency at Baltimore.

In fact, Missouri did cast one full ballot for Grant, but hastened to make Lincoln's nomination unanimous.

In his anxiety on this subject the President, just before the Convention, requested me to see General William Hillyer and talk with him of Grant's views on the Presidency. General Hillyer was a fellow-student at school with me at New Albany, Indiana, and was a member of General Grant's staff. Hillyer was at Willard's Hotel, Washington.

There I went and made my errand known to him. After a generous Western welcome, and after I stated my case, he broke out in a ringing laugh as he said: "Colonel, you can go and tell the President that there is no power on this earth that could drag Ulysses S. Grant's name into this Presidential canvass. McClelland's career was a lesson to him. The latter tried to capture Richmond with Washington as his base. Grant is as wise as he is loyal to Lincoln. Talking of this very subject, anent the expected action of his Missouri friends in the coming convention General Grant said: 'I could not entertain for one instant any competition with our great and good President for the succession. I owe him too much, and it's not my time. I regard Abraham Lincoln as one of the world's greatest men. He is unquestionably the biggest man I ever met. I admire his courage, as I respect his patience and his firmness. His gentleness of character does not conflict with that noble courage with which he changes his convictions when he is convinced he is wrong. While stating a complicated case to him his grasp of the main question is wonderfully strong, and he at once comprehends the whole subject better than the person who states it.'"

This was the last interview I ever had with General Hillyer, who was a bluff, straightforward, typical Western soldier. He died soon after in St. Louis, I think.

Hillyer told me I had *carte-blanche* from Grant to say that under no possible circumstances could he be coaxed or driven into the Presidential race of 1864.

It was with a light heart I found my way back to the East Room, where I had the good fortune to find the President entirely alone. He rose to his feet, grasped both my hands in each of his own, a habit he had when pleased, pushed a chair over toward the one from which he had risen, and said, in a tone of voice no man can re-produce: "Now, tell us all you know." I said: "Mr. Lincoln, what Hillyer says Grant thinks. And he said that Grant is of the opinion that you are the one man to finish the big job you undertook nearly four years ago. He will help you conquer the Rebellion without conditions, and he will aid you in restoring and rebuilding the country and making the Union perpetual. He even recalled Cavour's letter to Seward, in which the Italian statesman said: 'You will again make America what she was: the admiration of man and the wonder of the world.'"

I relate my story with a little less rhetoric and more emphasis than my memory re-produces it here. Lincoln rose to his feet and with more fire and *clan* than I ever before witnessed in him. He paced up and down the room, pausing to look out on the placid Potomac. He talked briefly and in earnest. He said, (and it seems to me only yesterday he said it): "Ah, Colonel, you have lifted a heavy load from my shoulders. I was a little afraid of Grant, because I know the men who want to get behind his great name—we are all human; I would rather be beaten by him than by any living man; and when the Presidential grub gets inside of a man it hides well. That 'basilisk' sometimes kills." Mr. Lincoln, still pacing the room, told how General McClelland of Illinois tried to leap into Grant's place before Vicksburg, when he laid his Presidential veto on the intrigues and strengthened Grant's hands till Vicksburg was captured.

Lincoln said: "I met Grant March 9, 1864, and as I handed him his commission I said: 'As the country herein trusts you, so under God it will sustain you.'" That was a red-letter day in my memory of Lincoln. A nature tinged and saddened by his early and romantic passion for Ann Rutledge, who died years before his marriage, must always remain an enigma to a careless world, which did not understand how, to an intense nature like Lincoln's, such a passion for a tenderly gracious and gifted woman was as divine as duty and stronger than death. Added to the strong, masterful, practical side of his nature, he was of "imagination all compact."

"Made sad and sure,
By many sorrows and one love."

He felt keenly and often so expressed himself, the great loneliness of power, and he grappled with hooks or steel those who loved him, not for the largess of office, but who clung to him because they saw and loved in him the deep, underlying, pathetic, self-abnegation of a pure, unselfish and lofty soul, and he had the rare power of knowing the true friend from the sycophant.

And the history of this sad, glad, wise, quaint and lovable man from out of the West, great as he was pure, will live forever. His name will grow into the granite base on which shall be built in the coming on of time the statue of an ideal statesman in a Republic of honest men, where pure law shall be measured only by perfect freedom.

DAVE'S LETTER

BY CHARLES UDELL.

"HELLO, Dave," said Lou Meyers, the freighter, stopping his pack-horses at the camp on Gold Run; "the Oregon is up from Nome, and my son wanted me to tell you there's a letter for you."

and his partners were just finishing their lunch of sour-dough bread, and bacon, which their sturdy little stove had cooked in spite of the strong wind and occasionally falling snow. He, a square-built, athletic man of thirty, whose ten years in Alaska had not made him a stampede too dangerous for him to be among the first to start, sprang to his feet.

"Didn't tell you where it was from, did he?"

"No. Said it was plump and dark-covered, or had trimmings—something like that."

Dave's face paled.

"You don't mean black-bordered—not a mourning letter?"

"No; he didn't say so, anyway."

Dave walked over to the little A-shaped tent a couple of rods away, and disappeared inside.

"Now you've played hides, Lou," said Mickey, one of his partners. "Dave would mush a hundred miles in a blizzard to get a letter from his wife."

"That letter's worth going after," said Meyers, "even if he had to go to Nome instead of to Teller. But don't say anything; here he comes."

Dave re-appeared, accompanied by his dog, and carrying a blanket.

"I'm going to Teller, boys. Anything I can do for you?"

"Better wait till morning, Dave. The sun will be down in half an hour. It's going to stop snowing, and freeze hard before morning."

"Can't help it; I'm going."

"Then take more blankets; you'll be out all night."

"No. I'll be in Teller by eight o'clock this evening. I'm only taking this one because I'm short in town. Good bye;"

